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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ROH'S MEETING WITH RICHARDSON-PRINCIPI  
DELEGATION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Bill Stanton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In an April 12 meeting with President Roh Moo-hyun, New Mexico Governor Richardson and former Secretary of Veteran's Affairs Anthony Principi said that the DPRK had been cooperative in assisting the transfer of the remains of servicemen thought to have died during the Korean War. The Richardson-Principi delegation also came away with the impression that North Korea was prepared to implement the February 13 Initial Actions agreement, provided the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) issues were resolved satisfactorily. Calling the remains recovery mission a "noble endeavor," President Roh expressed deep appreciation to Richardson and Principi for honoring those who perished during the Korean War. Roh believed that such missions would help draw out the DPRK, which was deeply isolated and suspicious of the outside world. Roh also thanked A/S Hill for expending enormous effort to bring about a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. Now the responsibility for further progress, Roh said, was "squarely with North Korea." Roh speculated that perhaps the lack of North Korean action since the U.S. decision to unblock the DPRK's BDA accounts was due to internal problems. Ultimately, North Korea had no choice but to join the rest of world, Roh believed. END SUMMARY.

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REMAINS RECOVERY: A NOBLE ENDEAVOR  
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12. (U) The Richardson-Principi delegation, in North Korea April 8-11 to bring back the remains of servicemen, paid a call on ROK President Roh Moo-hyun in Seoul on April 12. The delegation was accompanied by visiting EAP Assistant Secretary Hill and the Charge.

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13. (U) Roh said that it was good news that the delegation had brought back the remains, because such operations had been suspended since 2005. The high priority accorded by the USG and the American people to recovering the remains of those who had sacrificed for their nation was noble. The rest of the world admired this very-American quality. This was particularly true of the Richardson-Principi mission, because, technically, the United States and North Korea were still at war.

14. (U) Governor Richardson expressed the delegation's appreciation for the hospitality and cooperation shown by the ROKG to make their mission a success. The DPRK had also helped greatly. The return of the remains was unconditional, with no compensation. The DPRK side also provided a dignified journey through the DMZ. Secretary Principi said that he was honored to join this bipartisan mission, which had enormous meaning and importance for the affected families.

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SIX-PARTY TALKS  
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15. (C) Governor Richardson said that North Koreans remained deeply isolated from and suspicious of the outside world. They regarded China as domineering and unreliable, and Japan as malignant. Still, North Koreans seemed to view South Korea much more positively, especially compared to his impressions in his previous visits. This was principally due to President Roh's engagement policy. North Korea wanted to deal with the United States and South Korea openly and directly, not through China or anyone else. Richardson and Principi assessed that the DPRK would re-engage in the Six-Party Talks and meet the February 13 Initial Actions commitments, provided that the BDA issue were resolved satisfactorily.

16. (C) Roh said that Washington had shown determination in trying to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks. Thanking A/S Hill for his enormous diplomatic effort, Roh said that he knew that it was not easy for the USG to make such decisions. A/S Hill responded that the USG had made an important decision to support the unblocking of the North Korea-related accounts in Banco Delta Asia. Now, we were all waiting for a response from Pyongyang, which had been frustratingly slow. This was not a good sign for the whole process, A/S Hill said.

17. (C) Roh agreed that Washington had tried hard to resolve the BDA issue; everyone knew that. Now the responsibility was squarely with North Korea. Roh said that perhaps the lack of North Korean action was due to internal difficulties. In his experience, North Koreans wanted to win every negotiation, and would declare victory at each one. Roh was, therefore, a loser in every negotiation with the North. This did not bother Roh, however, because ultimately North Korea had no choice but to open itself and join the rest of the world.

18. (C) Simply put, Roh said, North Korea could not survive with nuclear weapons alone. In Hanoi, President Bush had said the technical state of war on the Korean Peninsula should end; the Armistice should be replaced by a peace treaty. This was North Korea's opportunity and destiny. Even the DPRK, which was hyper-suspicious, could not pass up such an opportunity. This was why, Roh believed, the North Koreans would soon resolve their own technical problems related to the BDA funds and make progress in denuclearization.

19. (U) President Roh again thanked the Richardson-Principi delegation because its efforts furthered the cause of peace on the Peninsula.

110. (U) The Richardson-Principi delegation did not have an opportunity to clear this message.  
STANTON